

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

A Verse by Verse Study

by

Oliver B. Greene

Copyright © 1963

CHAPTER THREE

The Seven Churches: Continued

THE SPIRIT'S MESSAGE TO SARDIS

Revelation 3:1-6:

1. And unto the angel of the church in Sardis write; These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars; I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead.
2. Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die: for I have not found thy works perfect before God.
3. Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee.
4. Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy.
5. He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels.
6. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

In the message to the angel of the church in Sardis, we have the general state or condition of the church after the Reformation. In the message to Thyatira, we have the condition of the church before the Reformation. I realize that these messages were actually directed to churches that existed in John's day - but as I have stated already, each church represents a period of time from Pentecost to the Rapture.

In Sardis, Protestantism is in power, whereas in the Thyatira assembly the Papacy (Rome) controlled. The one overlaps the other; but although there is not an abrupt break between the two, they do signify certain periods of time. The Reformation was a definite turning point in the history of Western Christianity. God used Martin Luther and others to open the eyes of the masses, and for the first time the Word of God was put into language the common man could understand. Down through the ages, Rome has done her best to keep the Word of God from the ordinary people, but it is God's will that every believer have access to His Word, and the Holy Spirit is our teacher (I John 2:27).

The city of Sardis lay about twenty-seven or twenty-eight miles south of Thyatira. The city was very wealthy, filled with pride. It was the capital of the Kingdom of Lydia. Sardis was conquered by Cyrus, and with its fall the Lydian monarchy came to an end. The once proud city of Sardis decayed entirely. History tells us that in 1850 not one human being was found living in Sardis.

The present name of the city is Sart.

Verse 1: "**And unto the angel of the church in Sardis write; These things saith He that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars; I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead.**"

This verse identifies the speaker . . . "**He that hath the seven Spirits of God.**" The seven Spirits of God is a perplexing statement to many Bible readers. Paul speaks of "**One Spirit**" in his Epistles, and certainly the Holy Spirit IS one Spirit. We are all baptized into one body by one Spirit, and have all been made to drink into one Spirit; but in Revelation the phrase "**seven Spirits**" is used to assure us of the completeness, the fulness, and the diversified actions and ministries of The One Holy Spirit.

Isaiah 11:2 enlightens us: "**And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord.**"

1. The Spirit of the Lord
2. The Spirit of wisdom
3. The Spirit of understanding
4. The Spirit of counsel
5. The Spirit of might
6. The Spirit of knowledge
7. The Spirit of the fear of the Lord.

The fulness of the Spirit is in Christ; and we can rest assured that whatever state the church may be in . . . it may have left its first love, it may be corrupt, it may be dead . . . but there is in Him who is in the midst of the golden candlesticks, adequate spiritual power to meet every need, regardless of what that need may be.

The speaker not only has the seven Spirits of God, but also the "**seven stars.**" The stars are the light-bearers of the local assemblies. Their responsibility is to shine for Christ, to reflect the light of Christ and of Heaven to the people in the assembly and the community who live in darkness . . . the darkness of this world.

Christ has both the "**seven Spirits**" and the "**seven stars.**" All light and all ministry proceed from Christ. Jesus gives to us the ministry we are capable of handling, and it will be a happy day in the lives of ministers and Christian workers when we are ready to recognize that God knows what He is doing when He places us in a particular ministry.

If we will faithfully discharge our duties and faithfully minister in the capacity He gives us, we will have our time so filled that we will have no time left to covet nor to criticize another man's ministry. Whatever may be the ministry in the church, if it is successful and as it should be, it proceeds from the Lord Jesus Christ in whom all fulness dwells, "**in whom ye are complete**" (Colossians 2:8-10).

Verse one closes with the same announcement made by the Spirit to all the churches: "**I know thy works.**" But the statement here goes further. Members of the church at Sardis had the name that they were alive - but the Lord is omniscient, He knows all things - and though

Sardis announced life, God knew, the church there was dead. Man looks upon the outward appearance, God looks on the heart. Many times when we pass a magnificent structure we say, "My! That is a great church! What a beautiful building!" While a little store-building on down the street, with the word Mission written across the door, may be a much greater church in the eyes of the Lord than the great edifice on Main Street.

Such was - and is - Protestantism in many places today. Many great Bible authorities regard the Reformation as the greatest blessing to Christianity, and declare the greatest curse to be the beginning of Rome (the Papacy).

We must distinguish between the Reformation and Protestantism. The Reformation was the divine work of the Holy Spirit. Protestantism is a human system, and many times is just as dead as dead can be. The reformers - Martin Luther and others - succeeded in breaking the chains and shackles of Rome, and Christianity flourished for a season. Some may have wondered, "Will this zeal continue? Will victory succeed victory? Will one victory lead to another?"

The devil has had a lot of experience. He is not asleep. He is on the job, walking about seeking whom he may devour. Thus, before long, the Reformation began to cool and lapse into formal, lifeless, cold Orthodoxy. The great reformers died - and those who replaced them led the church into "systems." Instead of searching the Scriptures, they drew up dogmas and followed tradition.

Spiritual power was gone, and the zealous lost their zeal.

Soon the church had a name that it was alive - but it was dead.

Protestantism did not produce the gross corruption and the horrible spiritual fornication produced in the Middle Ages; Protestantism produced spiritual slumber. The church was dead-asleep. It was alive in name only.

Verse 2: "Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die: for I have not found thy works perfect before God"

We are to occupy until He comes. We are not to sleep as others do . . . we are to be alert. Watching and praying go hand in hand as having to do with the Lord's return (Mark 13:33). Watching and praying are Siamese twins when it comes to winning in the Christian conflict, and being an overcomer (Ephesians 6:18).

I wonder how many Christians we have today who are alert - watching and praying - really looking and longing for the return of the Lord? There is no New Testament truth that will so stir a church and keep it clean, as will the truth of the Lord's return "**in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye.**" They who believe in the imminent return of the Lord, live zealous, pure lives. "**And every man that hath this hope, purifieth himself, even as He is pure**" (I John 3:1-3).

What little spirituality remained in Sardis was rapidly dying out, and that assembly was therefore admonished to "**strengthen the things which remain.**" The fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22,23) still existed there, even though that fruit was undoubtedly very feeble; and it must be strengthened immediately, or else all true Christianity would vanish from Sardis.

Verse 3: "**Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee.**"

To Ephesus the Spirit said, "**Remember**" (Revelation 2:5).

Again in this present verse the church is admonished to remember. Ephesus was admonished to remember their first love - the glorious experience they had had with Christ, the One who was standing in the midst of the golden candlesticks. In verse 3, Sardis is admonished to remember the golden age of the Reformation. (This church is after the Reformation - the time when spiritual power and exceeding joy flooded the hearts of the believers.) Therefore, the Spirit admonishes these people to remember that glorious era . . . remember men like Luther, Wesley and others. In this verse there is also a threat from the One who stands in the midst of the golden candlesticks. The church is to remember - hold fast and repent . . . and watch; and if they do not remember, repent, and watch, Jesus will come as a thief and judge them. (Read I Thessalonians chapter 5.) Unless they repent, He will come to them as a judge - unknown, unlooked for and unexpected.

I am afraid that Protestantism and the world have come to terms, and the great majority of church members today find more pleasure in the world than they do in the prayer meeting. They find more pleasure in the things of the world than in the things of the Spirit. Therefore, if the church and the world agree and walk together, they must suffer the same judgment, the same doom. The Lord Jesus will come to the Church as the Morning Star. To Israel He is the Sun of Righteousness. To the world and to professing Christendom, He will come in sudden surprise as "**a thief in the night.**"

The Papacy (Thyatira) and Protestantism (Sardis) are running on together, but in opposite lines; but great efforts are being made to heal the breach between Protestantism and Romanism. The differences between the two are becoming less and less, and the hour is fast approaching when all differences will be ended between them. As I dictate these lines, a great council is in progress to set the stage for the great world church which will be headed by the devil himself in the person of the Antichrist. The end of that church will be devastating judgment from Him who is the head of the True Church - the Lord Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God.

Verse 4: “**Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy.**”

As I have previously stated, there was a very small remnant in Sardis who bore the fruits of the Spirit . . . very weak, but they were there. God has always had His true remnant here on earth, and always will have until the Rapture of the Church. As it was in the days of Noah, as it was in the days of Lot, so shall it be in the day when the Son of Man shall appear. In Noah’s day, eight people were saved. In Lot’s day the number was cut from eight to three. As it was, so shall it be. The Word of God asks, “**When Jesus returns to this earth will He find faith?**”

More false prophets have risen in the last ten years than in any given period of time prior to that. Magazines have donated multi-millions of dollars worth of advertising for ministers who deny the deity of Christ, His shed blood, and the cardinal truths of Christianity. In this day, men are trying to strip the Lord Jesus of His deity and demote Him to the level of all men. Thank God that cannot, and it will not happen; but these things are a sign that Jesus is at the door. Surely, He will come quickly. Surely He cannot tarry much longer.

The remnant of true believers in Thyatira were referred to as “**the rest in Thyatira.**” How many “the rest” were, we do not know. But notice here in Sardis the Scripture says, “**a few names.**” There were a few - a very few - in Sardis, who were undefiled, who had not completely denied the Lord. They were truly born again, and had not defiled their garments with the world, the flesh, and the devil. The majority in Sardis had a name that they were alive, but only a few really were alive.

The few who had not denied His name and who were genuinely born again, had the promise, “**They shall walk with me in white.**” They had washed their robes and made them white in the Blood of the Lamb, and would therefore walk with the glorified Saviour in white robes.

The statement “**they are worthy**” could be made only about persons washed in the Blood, saved by the grace of God. Even though these few might be as “**a brand plucked from the fire,**” they would walk in white because there is no degree of redemption. There are degrees of reward - but when people are saved their sins are washed away and they are as white as snow. Even though these few were cold and indifferent, seemingly almost dead spiritually, they would walk with the Redeemer, dressed in white robes, in that glorious resurrection morning.

Overcomers will wear white. Their names will not be blotted out of the Book of Life. True life in Christ Jesus is proven by victorious living by those who possess His life (Colossians 1:27). True born again saints of God do overcome. Read carefully I Corinthians 10:13, I John 4:4, Romans 8:31-39, Ephesians 4:30.

We live victorious lives because “**greater is He that is in you than He that is in the world.**” In John 17, Jesus prayed to the Father, “. . . **Those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the Scripture might be fulfilled**” (John 17:12). (The son of perdition here refers to Judas Iscariot, who still has a job to do here on this earth during the Tribulation period).

Judas hanged himself and “**went to his own place.**” He will return to this earth during the Tribulation period.

Judas Iscariot was the devil in flesh. In John 6:70 Jesus said, “**Have I not chosen twelve, and one of you is a devil?**” It is true he was a member of the disciple band, but he fell from apostleship. Judas always referred to Jesus as “**Master,**” never as Lord, or Saviour. Jesus IS Master, even of the devil. Judas “had a name that thou livest,” but he was dead. His name was on the disciple register, but not in “**THE LAMB’S BOOK OF LIFE**” (Revelation 21:27). (Those who are interested in this subject may order my book on *The Antichrist*. It is available through the Gospel Hour ministry).

There is a difference between “**the Book of Life**” referred to in our Scripture here, and “**the Lamb’s Book of Life**” mentioned in Revelation 21:27. Sardis “**had a name that thou livest,**” but in reality the assembly was dead. There were a few believers there, however, who had been truly born again. They were in the minority, they were not zealous and alert, but they were alive.

Let me remind you that there is a difference between redemption and rewards. It is altogether possible for a true believer to lose his reward. Read II John. Study it carefully. The same John who wrote Revelation uses the entire second Epistle of John to warn Christians concerning the truth, “**that we might receive a full reward.**” It is possible for a real believer to be snatched as a brand from the burning . . . to be saved “**so as by fire.**”

This passage in Revelation does not contradict what Jesus said in Matthew 10:32,33:
“Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven.” In Revelation 3:5 we read, “**But I will confess his name before my Father, and before His angels.**” These few had not denied the name of Jesus.

They had confessed Him and had sincerely put their trust in Him. They were genuinely saved - while the masses were professors, not possessors. The professors had joined the local assembly, but they were not born into the family of God.

In Acts 2:47 we learn how we become a member of the New Testament Church. When we are saved, the Lord adds us to the Church. The moment we are saved we are added to the Church through the baptism of the Spirit (I Corinthians 12:12, 13).

Verse 6: “**He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.**”

The message to the angel of the church in Sardis closes with the admonition to “**hear the message of the Spirit to the churches.**” God help us to be again reminded that we are individually responsible to the Lord God Almighty. We are to hear what the Spirit says - not what man says or teaches.

Let me point out that in Sardis, the admonition to “hear” comes after the promise of reward to the individual overcomer. The entire assembly at Sardis was not an overcoming church. The overcomers there were only the few who had not bowed to the world, the flesh, and the devil.

THE SPIRIT'S MESSAGE TO PHILADELPHIA

Revelation 3:7-13:

7. And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write; These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth;
8. I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name.
9. Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie; behold, I will make them to Come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee.
10. Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.
11. Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.
12. Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name.
13. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

The message to the church at Philadelphia is the message to the True Church in the professing church . . . the true believers among the many members. The city of Philadelphia was twenty-five miles south of Sardis. It was named for its founder, Attalus Philadelphus, who was king of Pergamos. Today the city is named Allah Shehr, meaning “*City of God*,” and is populated largely by Greeks (there are approximately fifteen thousand there). The remains of early Christian influences are more clearly seen today in this city than in any of the other cities in Asia where the seven churches were located. The ruins of twenty-five churches can be found there, and marble pillars - the remains of great churches - can be plainly seen. No doubt these marble columns are the remains of pillars that were there even in John’s day or shortly thereafter.

The city of Philadelphia continued longer than any of the other cities named by John, and was the last Christian city to surrender to the Turks. The name “**Philadelphia**” means *brotherly love*. Brotherly love is a distinct characteristic of the household of God (Ephesians 2:19). Jesus said, “**By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one for another**” (John 13:35).

Verse 7: “**And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write; These things saith He that is holy, He that is true, He that hath the key of David, He that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth.**”

The Messenger to the church in Philadelphia identifies Himself by saying, “**These things saith He that is Holy, He that is True.**” These are divine attributes. Read Hosea 11:9, Jeremiah 10:10, Revelation 4:8, I Thessalonians 1:9, Isaiah 6:3, I John 5:20. Deity is delivering the message to the church of brotherly love.

The Messenger is further identified by the words, “**He that hath the key of David.**” Jesus is the One who has the key of David (Isaiah 22:22). Jesus is also the One who holds the keys of hell and of death (Revelation 1:18).

Jesus gave to Peter the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven, and Peter used those keys to open the Kingdom of Heaven to the Jews on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2). He again used the keys to open the door of salvation by grace to the Gentiles, in the house of Cornelius (Acts 10). Peter left these doors open - therefore the keys of the Kingdom are mentioned no more. Since the door of the Kingdom has not been closed, it does not need to be opened in these modern days by a pope, a priest, a bishop, a preacher nor an evangelist. The door is open to “**whosoever will.**”

Verse 8: “**I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name.**”

The One delivering the message to the church in Philadelphia is the One who opens - and no man shuts; shuts - and no man opens. This is the door of service, not of salvation. “**Behold, I have set before you an open door.**” Read Acts 14:27, I Corinthians 16:9, II Corinthians 2:12. Jesus has the key that opens the door of service. Who would dare question His authority to open that door - or to close it? His authority is final and irresistible.

The door of service was open to the church in Philadelphia because the assembly there had (1) kept His Word, and (2) had not denied His name.

The church in Sardis walked hand in hand with the world, and therefore God had no alternative but that Sardis must suffer the judgment of a holy God. God cannot condone sin. Whatsoever is sown by a man, a family, a church or a nation, that shall they also reap. “**The world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever**” (I John 2:15-17). The future of the saints at Philadelphia was bright because they kept His Word and confessed His name. They did not deny the Lord before a wicked and perverse generation.

No man can shut the door which is open to those who honor the Word of God and the precious name of Jesus. Many times in the New Testament, the Spirit opened and closed doors to the apostles. One such case is found in Acts 16:6-7. The Holy Spirit definitely shut the door to certain cities, forbidding the apostles to preach there. When the blind man was brought to Jesus in the city of Bethsaida, He took him outside the city, opened his blind eyes and then instructed him to go home.

He commanded him not to return to the city, nor tell any person in the city who had opened his eyes. “**And He sent him away to his house, saying, Neither go into the town, nor tell it to any in the town**” (Mark 8:26). Read verses 22 through 26 to get the complete story. God commands certain men to go to certain places and carry on certain ministries, but He also commands some ministers NOT to go to certain cities and peoples. It is God who opens and closes the door of service.

In I Corinthians 16:9 the Holy Spirit opened a great door to a mighty preacher - the Apostle Paul.

We ministers would be much better off if we would commit our ways unto the Lord and ask Him to open doors for us, instead of attempting to open them through political schemes and religious string-pulling. Some ministers go to certain denominational schools so they will be sure to be called into a pastorate when they obtain their degree.

You may rest assured that God Almighty does not call a surplus of preachers. Whom God calls, God ordains, and whom God calls and ordains, God also provides with a pulpit. "**As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God**" (Romans 8:14).

If we are led of the Spirit, we will be led in the right path, to the right city, to the right pulpit - and, as in the case of Philip, to the right person. Philip left a great revival, and followed the Spirit to the chariot of one man who needed the Lord - and what a victory he won!

Philadelphia is the second of the seven churches without reproof or rebuke. Smyrna is the other church not rebuked or reproved by the Spirit. Smyrna was the suffering church, the persecuted church, the church that underwent a blood bath. Philadelphia, the weak but faithful church, is not rebuked, but on the contrary is commended because she kept the Word and did not deny the name that is above every name.

The period represented by the church at Philadelphia covers approximately from 1750 through the period just after World War II. However, the church at Philadelphia and the Laodicean church will coexist until the True Church is caught out and the lukewarm church is spewed out. When I say these two churches will coexist, I do not mean in the spiritual aspect. I mean insofar as both remaining on the earth.

The revival that brought the church of brotherly love out of the few names left in Sardis, began with the great preachers such as Whitfield, Wesley, Finney, and Moody. What giants of evangelism they were! Would to God we had a Moody or a Finney on the scene today! It is true we have great men of God on the field today, but not like those men. The revival fires once swept through the open doors around the world.

Sad, sad, sad! But most of those doors are closed today, and others are in the process of being closed. Communism has closed many doors that were open in the days of Moody.

As I dictate these words, I think of the beautiful island of Cuba. I personally made three missionary trips to that island. I preached the Gospel in many, many places there. I witnessed a modern miracle in the work of Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Willy at Pinar Del Rio, in the Bible School. I had the opportunity of speaking many times in that Bible School. But where is Cuba today? That door was open a few years ago; now it is closed. And as the end approaches we will see more and more doors closed.

God could have kept them open - but He permitted them to be closed because of the unfaithfulness of believers.

The church in America spends millions for movies, cosmetics, cigarettes, soft drinks, televisions and automobiles - and sends the left-over pennies to missions! God pity America when this country stands before God! “To whom much is given, of the same shall much be required.”

Oh, God! Have mercy on us to whom so much has been given!

There was a “**little strength**” left, there were a “**few names**” left, and through the little strength and the few names, great battles of righteousness were won by the dear men of God - spiritual giants who wielded the sharp two-edged sword of the Word without fear or favor, the Holy Spirit honoring their faithfulness, using these men and a few others like them to turn millions’ to the Lord Jesus, thus bringing into being the church at Philadelphia - the church of brotherly love, the church that kept the Word and confessed the Name in which salvation is found - the only name through which sinners can be saved (Acts 4:12).

Verse 9: “**Behold I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie; behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee.**”

We meet with the same party here as in the address to Smyrna. The character of opposition may not be the same in both church periods, for Satan varies in his methods of attacks, but in both the opposition is termed the “**synagogue of Satan**.” Those referred to are not necessarily of Jewish nationality, but just as the Jews claim to be God’s chosen people here on earth and that to the exclusion of all others on earth, so here we have a church order which assumes the same position.

No doubt they demonstrated the spirit of hyper-Calvinism. But just remember that nothing misses the all-seeing eyes of Jesus . . . those eyes like “**flames of fire**.” The Son of God assures the true believers that He will set them straight; so He exposes the true character of these people and declares them to be “**the synagogue of Satan**.”

When Jesus was here on earth, He looked a group of His own people in the face and said, “**Ye are of your father, the devil!**” (John 8:44). You note that from the time He walked on earth until He stood in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks delivering the message as John penned it down, He did not change His message.

I have been preaching the Gospel many years, and I am preaching the same Gospel message today that I preached when I first began preaching. God’s minister does not change his Gospel, he does not change his message. The reason is clear: The Gospel never changes. “**Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today, and forever**” (Hebrews 13:8) - and, of course, Jesus is the Gospel.

Jesus assures the true believers in Philadelphia that He will make the pretenders, the counterfeit church members, those who profess but do not possess, to come and worship at the feet of the true Church. God is jealous for the Church. The Church is the Bride of Christ. He purchased it with His own blood (Acts 20:28), and those who counterfeit the true Church will pay for their deadly evil.

Verse 10: “**Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.**” What a promise!

Two things are pointed out here.

First, “**Because thou hast kept the word of my patience . . .**” By this the Spirit means, “Because you have been true to the pure Word of God.” Until we reach Heaven we will never know the importance of God’s holy Word.

Dear friend, did you know that if the devil could discredit the Word of God, the foundation of Christianity would crumble and hell would destroy the Church of the living God? But that will never happen. The Word of God is the solid Rock of Gibraltar, spiritually speaking. “**In the beginning was the Word, the Word was with God and the Word was God.**” If the devil could destroy the Word, the devil could destroy God, because God and His Word are synonymous. If the devil could discredit the Word of God, the devil would look God in the face and brand Him a liar.

But hallelujah! “**Thy Word, O Lord, is forever settled in Heaven!**” I thank God that the bishops, the translators and revisers cannot get their crooked, demented hands on God’s holy, pure, complete, protected, living Word. Praise His Holy Name!

Secondly - they had not only kept the Word, but they had also kept His name. They had not denied, but had lifted up the name that is lifted up in the Word - the name at the sound of which every knee shall bow in Heaven, in earth, and things under the earth (Philippians 2:10).

“I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation.”

There are many ideas, doctrines and dogmas concerning The Church and the Great Tribulation period that shall come upon the earth during the reign of the Antichrist. Some teach that The Church will go through the first half of the Tribulation. Some teach that The Church will go through all of the Tribulation. There are those who teach that The Church will be raptured in mid-Tribulation. And then - there are those who preach the truth: That The Church will be raptured before the appearing of Antichrist, before the beginning of the Tribulation, “**the hour of temptation that shall come upon all the world to try them that dwell upon the earth.**”

You may rest assured that the born again children of God will not enter or go through any portion of the Tribulation period that will come upon this earth. True believers keep the Word. True believers confess the name of Jesus. And the promise to the believers in Philadelphia is, “**Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I will keep thee from the hour of temptation that will come upon all the earth.**”

All outstanding, fundamental, evangelistic, Bible-believing teachers and preachers believe and teach that “the hour of temptation” mentioned here is the Great Tribulation known in the Old Testament as “**the time of Jacob’s trouble.**”

True believers will not go through any part of the Great Tribulation. Proof: "**FOR GOD HATH NOT APPOINTED US TO WRATH, BUT TO OBTAIN SALVATION BY OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST**" (I Thessalonians 5:9).

Born again believers are not saved to go through wrath.

We are saved and delivered from the wrath of God; therefore, as members of the body of Christ, we are not appointed unto wrath, but to obtain complete and full salvation.

- Jesus died on the Cross to redeem the soul.
- He lives to deliver us daily from the power of sin, the world, the flesh and the devil.
- He is coming in the Rapture to deliver us from corruption as having to do with the mortal body.

This mortal must put on immortality, and this great miracle will take place when Jesus comes in the Rapture. Read the entire fifteenth chapter of I Corinthians.

Read I John 3:1-3. But hear this! "**THE LORD KNOWETH HOW TO DELIVER THE GODLY OUT OF TEMPTATIONS** (meaning here the Great Tribulation that will come upon all the earth), **AND TO RESERVE THE UNJUST UNTO THE DAY OF JUDGMENT TO BE PUNISHED**" (II Peter 2:9).

When the flood came, not one drop of water fell until Noah and his family were safe within the ark "**and the Lord shut them in**" (Genesis 7:1 and 16). When Sodom was destroyed, not one spark of fire and brimstone fell on that city until Lot was safe outside, beyond the danger of the fire. Read Genesis 19:12-22 and you will discover that God said, "Lot, get out! I cannot destroy the city until you are on the outside!" II Peter 2:8 tells us that Lot was a righteous man, though "**vexed with the filthy conversation**" of Sodom.

Do not be angry with me - I did not write that. I am just reading it from God's holy Word and giving it to you in this message. It cannot be denied that the New Testament declares that Lot was a righteous man. He lost his family - with the exception of two daughters who later disgraced him. He lost all of his possessions . . . everything he had - but he was a righteous man, and God saw to it that he was safe outside the city before the fire fell.

God certainly loves The Church - the Bride of His only begotten Son - as much as He loved Noah and Lot.

So let no one tell you that The Church will go through any part of the reign of the Antichrist. You may rest assured that God did not save us to be buffeted and persecuted by the Antichrist. The Church is looking for Christ the Lord - not for the Antichrist.

In II Peter 2:9, the judgment has to do with the end time. The wicked will be judged through the great plagues and the horrible things that will occur as recorded in the book of Revelation, after the Rapture of The Church.

These terrible plagues and judgments will come upon the inhabitants of the earth during the Tribulation, after The Church has been taken out of the earth to meet the Lord in the air. The righteous will be delivered from these terrible plagues, and from the horrible deluge of fire, blood, and demon monstrosities that will invade this earth after the Rapture.

Just as God could not touch Sodom until Lot was out of the city (Genesis 19:22), God will not touch this earth in judgment and great tribulation until the Bride of Christ (the New Testament Church) is seated with the Lord Jesus in the air, at the marriage supper of the Lamb (I Thessalonians 4:13-18 and Revelation 19:7-10).

Cheer up, child of God - take courage! When all hell breaks loose on this earth and the Blood runs like a river for two hundred miles, ten feet deep; when sinners beg God to let the rocks and mountains fall on them and hide them from the face of Jesus; when men chew their tongues and beg God to let them drop dead (and yet they cannot die) - we born again believers will have a ringside seat in the sky! Did you know, dear believer, that the Rapture may take place today? It could take place this very moment! No man knows the day nor the hour, no man knows the moment - but the coming of Jesus is imminent. If you are born again, cheer up! Turn your eyes upon Jesus. Look for Him. Pray for Him to hasten His coming.

Verse 11: "**Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.**"

Verse eleven contains an announcement and good sound advice. "**Behold, I come quickly.**" When Jesus comes for The Church it will all be over in the twinkling of an eye. Believers are admonished to "**Hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.**" This does not say, "Hold fast to your salvation, let no man steal your salvation." Oh, no! It says "crown." Crowns are rewards. I will name them for you in just a few moments.

Verses 12 and 13: "**Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of Heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.**"

Without a doubt, the Philadelphia church is The Church that will be raptured out of this earth at the same time the Laodiceans will be spewed out. It is true that in John's day there was a city named Philadelphia, and there was a church there. But the message goes much further than the local assembly in Philadelphia. Each of the seven churches is identical to a period of church history behind us, up to the church at Philadelphia. We are now living in the time corresponding to the church at Philadelphia and the church of the Laodiceans.

The church at Philadelphia is a picture of The True Church, just before the Rapture. We are now living in the very hour of the coming of the Son of God for The Church. Every minute detail of prophecy having to do with the coming of the Lord has been fulfilled, or is being fulfilled today before our very eyes! So many things have happened in the past ten years, one almost becomes dizzy when comparing current events with prophecy.

Things prophesied centuries ago have been fulfilled in our day. One of these glorious days, the Rapture will take place - and it will all be over "**in the twinkling of an eye**" (I Corinthians 15:51, 52).

Are you, dear believer, "**holding fast what thou hast**"?

We preachers need more than ever to preach faithfulness to God in this hour. If ever there was a day when God's people need to be faithful and stand up to be counted for Jesus, it is today. There are many saved people who will be ashamed at the coming of the Lord. Salvation is God's gift. Rewards are earned through faithful stewardship (I Corinthians 3:11-15).

Yes, a believer can lose his reward; but Jesus is our salvation. When by faith we place our hand in His precious nail-scarred hand, He is able to keep us through His mighty power.

We are warned to hold fast that which we have, that we lose not our crown - but certainly a crown is not our salvation.

There are five crowns mentioned in the New Testament which can be earned by a believer through faithful stewardship:

1. The incorruptible crown (I Corinthians 9:25).
2. The crown of rejoicing (I Thessalonians 2:19).
3. The crown of righteousness (II Timothy 4:8).
4. The crown of life (James 1:12).
5. The crown of glory (I Peter 5:4).

If you will study each of these Scriptures, you will find clearly stated the requirements for coming into possession of one (or all five) of these crowns.

Some believers will receive a full reward. Others will lose their reward, and their works will be burned.

The outstanding danger among believers today is unfaithfulness to the pure Gospel. Please read and carefully study the Second Epistle of John, and hear what the Spirit is saying to you in that passage. No born again person should attend a church that is not true to the pure Gospel nor support a preacher who denies the faith. When I say "**the faith**," I am speaking of THE FAITH once delivered to the saints, as referred to in the first three verses of Jude.

"Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? SO RUN, THAT YE MAY OBTAIN" (I Corinthians 9:24). Personally, I want some trophies to lay at His feet when we crown Him Lord of all.

I want some trophies to lay at His feet when we crown Him King of Kings. By God's grace, I will be true and faithful to His Word. Will you join me in these closing days of the Age of Grace? Let us be faithful!

Overcomers will become pillars in the temple of God.

- There will be no liberal temples in the Pearly white City (Revelation 21:22).
- There will be no liberal temples here on earth during the judgments and during the Millennium (Revelation 11:1,2 and Acts 15:12-18).

The Lord God Almighty and the Lamb shall be the temple in the Pearly white City. Overcomers will be the pillars (the members) of that great temple of God. True believers are pushed around by the worldly element in the local assemblies. True believers and true Bible preachers are many times put out of the local church. But thanks be unto God, true believers and true preachers will not be put out of that holy temple in the New Jerusalem. "**HE SHALL GO NO MORE OUT!**"

When God's saints reach Heaven they will not be pushed around anymore. They will not be called fanatics and religious crackpots. Thousands of dear Christians today have been put out of churches they helped to build. Many believers sacrificed to build churches in the years gone by. But when the old saint of God, the minister of the Gospel, passed on to be with the Lord, a streamlined, seminary-manufactured denominational preacher took over and changed all the old ideas. He brought in "the new frontier" in religion. The mourner's bench was junked, the prayer room was outlawed, and a social gospel was substituted for the pure Gospel of God's marvelous grace.

Handshaking and card signing took the place of the real, old-fashioned "experience by grace through faith in the shed blood." Many dear ministers have been put out of churches they started and pastored for many months without a salary. But they have had to step aside and allow the streamlined preacher to take over. It will not be thus, thank God, in the by-and-by.

There is no danger of missing the identity of these true-blue, consecrated overcomers. Jesus tells us that He will identify them by writing on them the name of the City of God, and "**MY NEW NAME.**"

Again we hear the Spirit saying, "**He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith.**" In these "**last days**" we need as never before to hear the Spirit as He speaks to us. If we walk in the Spirit, fellowship with the Spirit and listen to the Spirit, we will not become discouraged in these trying hours. We will not hear the rumbling of the terrible judgments that hang heavily over this earth. While I dictate these words there is not one solitary prophecy remaining to be fulfilled before the Rapture of the Church. The Rapture could take place any second. I pray, "**Even so, come, Lord Jesus**" (Revelation 22:20).

Are you ready for the Rapture, dear friend? If you are reading these lines and you are not born again, do not put it off another moment. Bow your head and confess Your sins, ask the Lord Jesus to come into your heart and He will save you this very moment.

THE SPIRIT'S MESSAGE TO LAODICEA

Revelation 3:14-19:

- 14. And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God;**
- 15. I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot.**
- 16. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth . . .**
- 17. Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked:**
- 18. I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see.**
- 19. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.**

The message to the church at Laodicea is the message to the church in its final state of apostasy. Laodicea was located about forty miles east of Ephesus.

Its name was derived from Laodice, the wife of Antiochus II, the Syrian who ruled in the early days of the city.

Laodicea was a wealthy city, so much so that In spite of the fact that an earthquake destroyed it during the reign of Nero, A. D. 62, it quickly recovered from that terrible disaster, and from its own resources soon regained all the glory and wealth lost during the great earthquake. At the time John wrote the message to the local assembly there, Laodicea was again a magnificent and wealthy city.

From the account In Revelation, the wealth of the city greatly affected the church. It seems strange to most people that riches and sorrow go together. It is the love of money that is the root of all evil. Most of the time, riches produce rotten living. There are a few rich people who serve God, and there are a few rich churches that are spiritual; but the general rule is that riches bring sorrow.

Jesus said, "**How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!**" That does not mean that God cannot or will not save a rich man - He can, and He will. But the sad fact is that riches and spirituality somehow do not seem to walk together.

The assembly at Laodicea was "**rich and increased with goods.**" Luxury, self-satisfaction, pride and plenty were the ruin of the assembly there. Today the pride of that Laodicea has been brought down to the ground. Its wealth has been scattered. Its splendor lies in the dust of the earth. The site where that great city once flourished is now the scene of ruin and desolation.

Verse 14: "And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God."

There was a local assembly at Laodicea, and even in Paul's day some thirty years before John was exiled to Patmos, the condition of that assembly troubled Paul tremendously (Colossians 2:1). Seemingly the ruin of that church was pride, material wealth and self-satisfaction among the people. They did not need God - they had everything.

They gloried in things - not in the Lord. Since each church in Revelation represents a period in history between the beginning of the Church and the Rapture, we recognize that we are now living in a church age symbolized by the spirit of the Laodiceans of John's day - pride, wealth, and self-satisfaction.

Note the titles of the divine Speaker: "**These things saith the Amen.**" This title is a Hebrew word signifying both the true unchangeable nature of the Speaker, and the unchanging message of God's Word. Authorities on the original languages of the Bible tell us that the Hebrew word for "**Amen**" is literally "*truth*," or "*believe*." In the New Testament, the Greek word for "**amen**" can be translated "*verily*," which is another way of saying, "*truth*." So the Speaker addressing the Laodiceans is "**The Truth,**" and certainly that is Jesus (John 14:6, John 17:17).

Notice the second title given to the One who is addressing the Laodiceans: "**The faithful and the true witness.**" From Adam to this present time, every witness except this One has failed in one way or another. Who is this One? The Lord Jesus Christ! He is the only One who faithfully obeyed the commands, wishes and desires of the Heavenly Father in every minute detail.

- Has the church been a faithful witness? (I am referring to the local church on earth.)
- Has the church been a true witness to the treasures of His divine grace?
- Has the church been a true witness to the character of God?
- Is the living expression of God in Christ visible in the lives of the members of the local assembly?
- Is the church the light-bearer God intended it to be today?

Many churches have completely shut Him out, and He is standing at the door-knocking. Many local assemblies today are saying - in effect, if not in words - "We have need of nothing . . . we do not need the old-fashioned Word of God. We do not even need Jesus! We do not need the message of Calvary, stained with blood." (Precious blood, so divine!)

Jesus has been insulted and pushed out - but in spite of it all, He lingers at the door, He is knocking, and He cries, "**Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If any man, just one man, will open the door, I will come in and sup with him, and he with Me!**"

To the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ has been committed the most grand and glorious opportunity any group on this earth has ever had. But it seems that the visible local church has failed as no other group has ever failed.

Schools in America that were founded by God-fearing saints only a few years ago, now deny the God who gave Jesus to shed His blood for the remission of sins! In these institutions - built with the sacrificial dollars of hard working saints of yesteryear - is taught every heresy that hell ever dreamed of - and some heresies that even the devil must be ashamed of! God pity a two-legged human being who will deny the God who gives him air to breathe, and who will accuse God's Christ of being an illegitimate conceived out of wedlock, the offspring of lust - or a character of mythology, when in Bible truth, He is the Son of Almighty God, conceived by the Holy Ghost . . God in flesh!

In schools and seminaries that bear the name of Christian over their halls of learning, Christ is denied and slandered by the professors who are teaching the young men and women who will be tomorrow's preachers and missionaries if Jesus should tarry. I do not believe He WILL tarry. I believe the Lord is on the verge of spewing the Laodicean group out of His mouth. The next tremendous event for the church is the catching out of the true saints, and the spewing out of the Laodiceans.

Notice the third title given the Speaker: "**The beginning of the creation of God.**"

The creation that began with Adam, the creation of which he was the head - whether ecclesiastical, social, political or whatever - has gradually gone down, down, down - from bad to worse. If I believed in evolution, I would believe in evolution in reverse, because we are certainly far from what Adam was, and he was the father of all living. So if man is evolving, he is going backward, not upward!

And now the visible assemblies of Christendom are getting a little closer together, gradually rubbing out the line of separation and demarcation, and we hear the words "coexist . . . be brothers . . . we are all striving for the same place," and other unscriptural terms. The systems of this world are ready to be taken over by the last world rulers.

Ritualism in our churches is bringing Rome and Protestantism closer together, and the pope is crying for unity. He has decreed that Protestants are no longer heretics, but brethren who have erred from the faith . . . the faith (to him) being the church of Rome. Rationalism in our Protestant churches is leading toward infidelity and we have hundreds of infidels preaching in Protestant pulpits all over the world.

The former system (Popery) will head up - not under the pope, but under the man of sin, the Antichrist; while rationalism and infidelity will finally head up under the Beast, who will be a brute, a blasphemer, a murderer, the greatest persecutor of righteousness and righteous men who ever lived on this earth. He will be inspired, energized, and empowered by Satan himself. So far as we know, these two men may be alive today. They may be walking the streets of earth today.

Enemies locked arms and crucified Jesus - the Jews and Gentiles allied together and nailed Him to a Cross. Pilate and Herod were enemies, but they got together and condemned Jesus! It seems reasonable and altogether possible that the forces of ritualism and the forces of rationalism will unite to destroy the real, true faith and the true Church on earth - If such destruction were possible.

Verses 15 and 16: "**I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth.**"

Again the solemn words, "**I know thy works!**" This statement is made seven times in the messages to the seven churches. Omnipotence is a divine attribute, and Jesus Christ is divine - just as divine as is God the Father.

To the church at Philadelphia Jesus said, "**I know thy works.**" He then went on to say, "**For thou hast a little strength.**" He knew the weakness of the church at Philadelphia, He knew the lukewarm spirit of the Laodiceans - and He knows the spirit existing in your church, whatever that spirit may be. This last phase of the church is the worst, by all means.

Notice the use of the terms "COLD" and "HOT" - not "DEAD" and "ALIVE." The Laodiceans were in the most dangerous state possible. They were not referred to as being spiritually dead, nor as being spiritually alive . . . they were indifferent. They were lost, of course, for had they been born again they would not have been spewed out of the mouth of Him who is the Head of the Church. Total indifference to Christ - not hatred - is the condition of the Laodiceans.

The coldness and death of Sardis, mixed with the weakness - YET A LITTLE WARMTH - of Philadelphia, had produced the feeble, lukewarm condition in the Laodicean assembly. Had the church been totally cold, there would have been a possibility of reviving the coldness, and the church might have become warm again. Had it been hot, the Lord could have blessed. But it was neither cold NOR hot.

The church at Laodicea was a group of undecided, neutral members who would not take a stand one way or the other toward Christ or the truth, and this is the most hateful, disgusting spirit possible to display against God's Christ, God's Word, and God's Church. Such a condition must be dealt with immediately, and gotten rid of quickly. The last condition of the church is the worst by far. Total indifference is damning more people today than the liquor traffic, the dope traffic, and all other species of sin combined. "**How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?**" "**He that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.**"

It is not gross sins such as drinking, doping, murder and adultery that damn the soul . . . it is indifference. Procrastination - putting off receiving Jesus - is the sin that damns the soul.

The believers in the church at Philadelphia were greatly encouraged with the promise, "**I come quickly.**"

Laodicea is threatened with imminent judgment. Jesus says, in effect, "I am about to spue thee out of my mouth." The spirit that existed and the spiritual condition seen in the messages to the last four churches run concurrently to the end of the church age - the time when the Rapture will take place. The majority of the members of the assemblies in Thyatira and Sardis are responsible for the doom that finally comes upon Laodicea, and the true believers in these churches are those who share the blessing promised Philadelphia - "**Behold, I come quickly!**" When He comes, the true believers will be caught up to meet the Lord in the air.

The Lord's coming is not mentioned in the message to the Laodiceans. Only judgment is mentioned - they will be spewed out, all of them. Not even a remnant will be spared. The church is totally lukewarm. The believers in Philadelphia will be caught out, and the lukewarm church at Laodicea will be spewed out at the same time.

The two events take place when the Lord comes in the air. When the trumpet sounds, the dead in Christ shall rise, living believers shall be changed - and the lukewarm professors will be spewed out. All this will occur in the same "**twinkling of an eye.**"

Christendom began its history under the brightest promise and the most glorious events known to this world. Christendom will climax under the darkest cloud ever to rest upon the course of mankind. The Utopia the politicians talk about will never come to pass as long as the devil is loose; but when Jesus personally places him in the pit and sets a seal upon him, we will have Utopia (the 1,000 years reign of Christ here on earth which we call the Millennium). Until that glorious hour, evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse. The days of Noah and Lot will be repeated, and things will become darker and darker until the bright and Morning Star appears in the sky.

Verse 17: "**Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.**"

You will notice the believers in Philadelphia have not one word to say for themselves. They make no boasts nor brags. The Laodiceans testify in their own behalf: "**Thou sayest . . .**" In Laodicea, there was not only a self-satisfied condition in the assembly - but also pride.

The church boasted openly, "**I am rich!**" It is true that the city of Laodicea was materially rich, but the church had no right to boast in riches, nor to sell out to the riches of the secular city. Jesus said, "**Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.**" I am sure the church at Laodicea could have matched some of our big churches today - in members, social influence, gifts, showy buildings, robed choirs, intellectual leaders - and probably a banquet hall second to none even in this day.

But any church - whether in Laodicea or in your home town - is headed for ruin when it puts "things" ahead of Jesus. "**Seek ye first the Kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things will be added unto you**" (Matthew 6:33). Wealth (things) at the expense of spirituality is a tragedy and a curse.

Hear the Laodiceans testify further: "**And have need of nothing.**" These people had absolutely no place for the Lord Jesus Christ in their program. They did not need anything He had; they were completely satisfied. Even in the very face of judgment (verse 16) they continued to boast.

They did not believe in a God of judgment. They believed what the liberals and modernists are preaching today - "the goodness of God, the Fatherhood of God, the brotherhood of man." They did not believe in a God who is a consuming fire, a God who is angry with the wicked every day, a God who judges in righteousness. The condition of the Laodicean church described here could be front-page news of any religious paper in this hour. All who will face facts and agree to the truth must confess the same.

The last part of verse 17 is bursting with prophetic truth: ". . . **AND KNOWEST NOT that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked!**"

These people did not know their spiritual condition. They were so totally indifferent to the truth, to the Word of God, to the Gospel and to Christ Himself, that they were calloused (“**their conscience seared with a hot iron**”). They were past feeling, and deep down in their own sinful hearts they thought they were sitting on top of the world religiously. In reality, they were on top of the world religiously - but spiritually they were wretched, they were miserable - and yet their blind hearts could not see nor feel their misery.

They were poor, they were blind, they were naked.

Why did I say this part of the verse is bursting with prophetic truth? In Matthew 24:37-39 we have the answer:

“But as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, AND KNEW NOT until the flood came and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.”

In the days of Noah people were eating (it takes riches to eat and become gluttons). They were drinking (it costs money to drink). They were marrying and giving in marriage (it takes money to marry and divorce). This went on until the flood came and took them all away.

Why? Because they KNEW NOT. They were ignorant of the spiritual judgment that hung heavily over their heads, although they were wise in the things of this earth.

Read Genesis 4:16-26 and you will see that the people in Noah’s day were not stupid, ignorant people; they were learned men. They built cities. They were business men. They were instructors in iron and brass.

They were musicians - and they practiced wholesale killing! They continued to do these things until God took Noah and his family out from among them, placed them safely in the ark and shut them in. Then the flood came, and ALL were destroyed - except Noah and his family, who were safe in the ark.

Jesus is our Ark, and when judgment strikes on this earth we will be safe with Him in the sky. All the Laodiceans will be spewed out - not one will be kept. Surely we are living in the very hour of the Laodiceans. We can sum up the condition of that church in one sentence: Its actual spiritual condition before the Lord God, the Head of the Church, was totally unknown to the assembly.

They did not know.

Verse 18: “**I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried In the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see.”**

The characteristics of the Laodiceans are summed up by the Spirit in three words: Poverty - nakedness blindness! The Lord does not command the Laodiceans to repent - He counsels with them and offers to take care of their poverty, their nakedness, and their blindness. We find Him standing at the door, knocking - pleading for just one man to open the door and let Him in - but to no avail. Notice the counsel He gives: "**Buy of ME gold tried in the fire.**"

The riches of Christ are unknowable, inexhaustible. He has gold tried in the fire, and to buy from Him is no problem. Isaiah instructed, "**Buy without money.**" You do not need gold as man knows gold, in order to buy at the Lord's great Supermarket. "**Ho, everyone that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk WITHOUT MONEY and WITHOUT PRICE**" (Isaiah 55:1).

Gold, purified by fire, points to the divine righteousness of God - and Christ is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption (I Corinthians 1:30). Without the riches of His grace, we are of all men most miserable. We are the poorest of all men - but in Christ we are the richest of all men; Heaven is at our disposal, in Christ.

White garments are the righteousness of the saints (Revelation 19:8). To be clothed in righteousness is to be free from the shame of nakedness.

Eyesalve is for spiritual discernment. Unless our eyes are opened by the Lord, we cannot discern spiritual matters. "**The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned**" (I Corinthians 2:14).

Unless the Lord opens the eyes of our understanding we will never know the truth that makes us free.

Verse 19: "**As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.**"

This passage does not apply to any particular group, but to ALL the children of God throughout all ages. This verse is very enlightening, and needs to be preached in churches today. From the beginning of creation, the Lord God has rebuked and chastened those whom He loves - His own children (Proverbs 3:11,12; Hebrews 12:5,6). In Romans 11:22 Paul cries out, "**Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God.**"

The Word of God speaks for itself. The Scriptures carry their own light. Scriptures unlock themselves when we allow the Spirit to compare spiritual things with spiritual; therefore, hear these words:

"For whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth EVERY SON WHOM HE RECEIVETH. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? BUT IF YE BE WITHOUT CHASTISEMENT, WHEREOF ALL ARE PARTAKERS, THEN ARE YE BASTARDS, AND NOT SONS" (Hebrews 12:6-8).

Any person who can live in sin, prosper in sin, be happy in sin and continue in sin without the chastening hand of God being placed upon him, has never been a son. He may have made a profession, but was not truly born again. Whom the Lord loves, He whips!

We chasten our children when they get out of line. When they disobey, we whip them, and God loves us a million times more than we could ever love our children, and He is a million times more interested in our spiritual success than we are. "**He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake**" (Psalm 23). God does not lead me in paths of righteousness that I might boast or brag; He leads me in paths of right living because I am His son and if I fall into disgrace the reproach falls on Jesus. Whom the Lord loves, He chastens; and if you can practice sin and prosper and enjoy it without the chastening of the Lord, you are illegitimate, religiously speaking. You have never been truly born again.

Such was true in the case of the Laodiceans. Instead of rebuking them, God spued them out - but not before He warned, "**Be zealous therefore, and repent!**" When people are past feeling, when they know God but refuse to glorify Him as God, when they change the truth of God into a lie and worship and serve the creature more than the Creator, when they do not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gives them up. Please study the first chapter of Romans very carefully and you will see the picture of a host of people who knew God but refused to serve Him.

The Laodiceans were neither for nor against God. They were middle-of-the-roaders, lukewarm. They were neither hot nor cold. They could not repent, they could not be zealous, because they were past feeling. They had lukewarm hearts.

THE POSITION OF JESUS AS HAVING TO DO WITH THE CHURCH AT THE END OF THE CHURCH AGE

Revelation 3:20-22:

- 20. Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come into him and will sup with him, and he with me.**
- 21. To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.**
- 22. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.**

This last picture of the church is sad. At the beginning (at Ephesus) we found the Lord Jesus standing in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks . . . standing in the midst of the assembly . . while in Laodicea He is standing at the door, on the outside, knocking.

This tender, touching call of the Master has been the call of ministers down through the centuries, appealing to individuals to open the door and let the Lord Jesus in.

In this Scripture, Jesus is appealing to ANY (even ONE) individual, but He is knocking at the door of the Laodicean church - not the door of an individual heart. However, if one individual will open the door, His promise is, "I WILL come in and sup with him, and he with me."

"Behold, I stand at the door."

Thus the, Lord is pushed out. He is not within the assembly at Laodicea; He is outside, knocking and speaking. Here we have a true display of the grace of God, even when the church has stooped to the lowest degree and has pushed the Lord Jesus out.

Please notice, the Lord Jesus does not command the Laodiceans to buy (verse 18), nor does He force entrance (verse 20). **“I stand . . . I knock.”** You may rest assured that the Lord Jesus will never force Himself upon any home, any church, or any nation. He loves all, He came to seek and to save that which was lost. He is searching for the unsaved - but He will never force Himself upon anyone. The Lord will never intrude where He is not wanted.

When Jesus walked with the disciples on the road to Emmaus, **“He made as though He would have gone further”** (Luke 24:28). I am sure, had they not invited Him to go in with them, He would have continued His journey.

Jesus does not force His company upon anyone. **“They constrained Him, saying, Abide with us: for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent. And He went into tarry with them”** (Luke 24:29),

“If any hear my voice and open the door, I will come in and sup with him, and he with me.” We are saved by grace, through faith. **“So then, faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God”** (Romans 10:17).

If we hear the voice of Jesus, believe on Him and invite Him into our heart, He saves us; but we must invite Him, we must believe, we must receive.

Since the resurrection, Jesus knocks - He calls, but He does not force Himself upon any individual. In this day of grace, **“whosoever will”** may drink of the water of life freely - but they must desire the water, they must be thirsty, they must will themselves to drink.

To the unsaved Jesus is saying, **“I am the door. By me, if any man enter in, he shall be saved”** (John 10:9).

The door of salvation is always open to sinners - they need not knock. But the church door of the Laodicean assembly was closed in the face of Jesus, and He stood on the outside, knocking. His invitation in the closing days of this dispensation is, **“If any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come to him and will sup with him, and he with me.”**

Remember - as it was in the days of Noah, as it was in the days of Lot, so shall it be in the days of the coming of the Son of man. Eight souls were saved in the days of Noah; three souls were saved in the days of Lot.

And Jesus Himself asked, **“When He comes, will He find faith on the earth?”** Surely we are living in the hour of the lukewarm, professing church. I am sure if the Rapture should take place between 11:00 and 12:00 on Sunday morning, some churches in the midst of a service would not be disturbed, and from the preacher on down, not one would be taken from that congregation.

That assembly would not know anything had happened until the service dismissed and the people returned to their homes or neighborhood, to find some of their friends and loved ones missing. Yes, there are churches on earth today - local assemblies - where there is not one born again child of God in the group.

Verse 21: "**To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in His throne.**" This verse is bursting with truth and glorious revelation. How did Jesus come into the authority to sit with the Father in the Father's throne? It is true that from the standpoint of deity He had a perfect right to sit there - but bear in mind that He humbled Himself, took upon Himself the form of man, and became obedient unto death. In Hebrews 1:1-3 we are told that He is now seated at the right hand of God the Father; and when Stephen looked into Heaven, he saw Jesus standing at the right hand of God the Father.

I believe Hebrews 12:1-2 will clear up this question: "**Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith: WHO FOR THE JOY THAT WAS SET BEFORE HIM ENDURED THE CROSS, DESPISING THE SHAME, AND IS SET DOWN AT THE RIGHT HAND OF THE THRONE OF God.**"

"Who in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto Him that was able to save Him from death, and was heard in that He feared; though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered" (Hebrews 5:7,8).

By His life of patience and sacrifice, and by His death - the horrible death He died for His Father's glory - Jesus sits in an exalted position at the right hand of God the Father. He said, "**Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father**" (John 10:17, 18).

Jesus testified, "**My Father loves me because I lay my life down.**" No man killed Jesus. He willingly and voluntarily laid His life down because of the command of the Heavenly Father. He laid His life down in obedience to the Father's will. (In the Garden of Gethsemane Jesus prayed, "**Not my will, but Thine be done.**")

The conqueror's path of victory and reward lies open to every believer. Bear in mind that Jesus has never asked one of His children to travel a path He did not travel before us. The footprints of Jesus are our guide.

If we walk in the footsteps of Jesus, if we suffer with Him, we will reign with Him. The reward of the overcomer will be glorious; but it is not cheaply earned. Salvation is free - but discipleship and victory are earned at a tremendous price, and many times at the cost of suffering beyond the description of human words.

The throne of Jesus will be in Jerusalem (Luke 1:32,33; Matthew 19:28; Acts 2:30-35; Acts 15:14-16). However, the kingdom will be universal - that is, throughout the earth. Read Psalm 72:8, Zechariah 14:9, and Psalm 8. The kingdom will be filled with righteousness.

Read Psalm 72:1-7, Psalm 45:7, and Isaiah 32:1. Just as surely as Caesar had a throne, Jesus has a throne. He will sit on the throne of David, and we, the Bride of Christ, the New Testament Church, will reign with Jesus for one thousand glorious years right here on this earth (Revelation 20:1-5).

There are some Christians who say, "If I reach Heaven, that is good enough for me." Let me hasten to say, that is not good enough for ME. It is true that I want to be in that number when the saints go marching in, but I also want some trophies to lay at His feet when we crown Him Lord of all. And when He reigns, I want to reign with Him. I want to sit with Him in His throne.

I do not want to be bringing up the rear; I do not want to be in the background. I want to be near Jesus, like John when they ate the Last Supper and John lay his head on the bosom of Jesus. I know I shall not be worthy, but I do want to be faithful, I want to be an overcomer and a good steward for His honor and glory.

~ end of chapter 3 ~

<http://www.baptistbiblebelievers.com/>
